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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/ERA AND EUR/CE

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SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN VIEWS ON GAERC, GYMnich AGENDAS

REF: STATE 115017

Classified by: Economic-Political Counselor J. Dean Yap for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

(C) Polchief discussed reftel points October 31 with MFA European Correspondent Klaus Famira. Famira offered the following information on the upcoming GAERC and GYMnich:

-- Russia/Georgia: Famira said this will be the top issue at the GAERC. Participants will debate whether to move forward with the EU-Russia partnership agreement (PCA) or to postpone talks until Russia fully complies with its ceasefire obligations. Famira averred that EU representatives would strive to reach agreement on the next steps for the PCA before the November 14 EU-Russia Summit. He predicted that GAERC participants would settle on a "middle ground" between EU members favoring a freeze of the PCA and those who want to proceed on all fronts. Such a compromise could involve opening discussions on some portions of the PCA while postponing others. He said the GOA would likely favor such a compromise.

-- Transatlantic Relations: Gymnich participants will discuss areas where "fine tuning" could strengthen U.S.-EU cooperation. The Middle East -- particularly Afghanistan, Iran, and Iraq -- will be raised in the transatlantic context. EU representatives will evaluate the impact that a new U.S. administration could have on the Middle East Peace Process, and the potential role of the EU in the process. Participants will also examine the state of transatlantic cooperation regarding Russia, energy, and the Western Balkans.

-- Iran: Famira said Iran was not on the GAERC agenda, and he did not expect any discussion on autonomous EU sanctions.

-- Syria: Famira said he is not aware of any proposals to enhance EU engagement with Syria.

-- Congo: Though the Congo is not on the agenda, the French at the GAERC or Gymnich may raise the idea of sending a battle group there. The French have mentioned this in other EU fora, but have not received much support.  
GIRARD-DICARLO